

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

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MEDIA ADVISORY

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GOVERNMENT REFORM TO EXAMINE STERIOD USE BY YOUNG WOMEN

*7Percent of 9th Grade Girls Use Steroids
Drug Often Used to Improve Body Image*

What: Government Reform Committee Oversight Hearing:
“Eradicating Steroid Use, Part IV: Examining the Use of Steroids by
Young Women to Enhance Athletic Performance and Body Image”

When: WEDNESDAY, JUNE 15, 2005 at 10:00 A.M.

Where: ROOM 2154, RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

Background:

The Committee on Government Reform has held three previous hearings on steroid use, hearing from professional athletes, top league officials, medical experts and family members of steroid users. This week, the Committee turns its focus to a growing and disturbing trend: The use of anabolic steroids by young girls, who appear to be turning to these drugs not only, or even primarily, to enhance their athletic ability, but as a means to control weight and reduce body fat.

A recent survey of high school students conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) indicated that 5 percent of high school girls and 7 percent of 9th grade girls had used steroids without a doctor’s prescription. The use of steroids to improve body image often goes hand in hand with eating disorders – as well as abuse of other drugs – in order to stay thin.

The purpose of this hearing is to consider the potential health risks associated with illicit steroid use by females, the pervasiveness of this problem, and the need for prevention programs targeting middle and high school-aged females who might use steroids for purposes of athletic excellence and/or aesthetic enhancement.

The abuse of steroids and performance-enhancing drugs is a major public health crisis. Various studies indicate that steroid use has increased over the past several years among adolescents, women, and recreational athletes. Females in particular suffer devastating health consequences from steroid abuse. Adverse side effects include, but are not limited to, excessive growth of body hair; masculinization; premature arrest of bone development, resulting in stunted growth; irritability, delusion, and depression. In spite of such adverse physical and psychological effects, females continue to use steroids in order to excel in sports and/or enhance physical attractiveness.

The Committee will hear testimony from several medical experts who believe that steroid use by young women is an underreported problem, and that a great deal more research and scientific evidence are needed to more accurately quantify its pervasiveness. Additionally, adequate education and prevention programs are needed to address the problem: Dr. Diane Elliot's testimony will detail the successes of the ATHENA prevention program (Athletes Targeting Healthy Exercise and Nutrition Alternatives), which is designed for middle- and high-school-aged girls. The Committee will also hear from Kelli White, a former World Champion sprinter who will discuss her decision to come clean about her use of steroids, and her subsequent regrets about using the drugs. Mari Holden, a world class cyclist, will discuss the pressures clean athletes face in competing in an environment where their rivals may be taking performance-enhancing drugs.

Witnesses:

Kelli White, former World Champion sprinter

Mari Holden, Olympian and World Champion Cyclist

Dr. Diane Elliot, Professor of Medicine, Oregon Health and Science University

Dr. Todd Schlifstein, Clinical Instructor, New York University School of Medicine

Dr. Harrison Pope, Professor of Psychiatry, McLean Hospital, Belmont, MA

Dr. Avery Faigenbaum, Professor of Health and Exercise Science, The College of New Jersey

Dr. Charles Yesalis, Professor of Health Policy and Administration, The Pennsylvania State University

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